

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTO 01135 282151Z
ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3713
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 1135

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, DR
SUBJECT: BALAGUER INDICATES HE IS RUNNING FOR ANOTHER TERM

1. IN TRADITIONAL FEBRUARY 27 INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH
OPENING THE 1978 CONGRESS, JOAQUIN BALAGUER INDICATED
HE IS AVAILABLE FOR ANOTHER FOUR YEARS AS PRESIDENT.

2. WITHOUT ACTUALLY SAYING HE IS A CANDIDATE FOR RE-
ELECTION TO A FOURTH TERM, BALAGUER USED THE OCCASION OF
THE ANNUAL STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS TO DELIVER A HARD-
HITTING ATTACK ON THE PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DOMINICANO
(PRD), THE NATION'S LEADING OPPOSITION PARTY. BALAGUER'S
REFORMISTA PARTY WILL HOLD ITS CONVENTION MARCH 5 WHERE HE
WILL BE OFFICIALLY NOMINATED.

3. THE SPEECH WAS A REMARKABLE TOUR DE FORCE BY THE
DURABLE PRESIDENT, WHOSE HEALTH HAS BEEN CAUSE OF PUBLIC
CONCERN AND WHOSE EYESIGHT IS POOR. SPEAKING ENTIRELY
FROM MEMORY, HE SHOWED HIMSELF TO BE A POLITICAL LEADER
TOTALLY IN CONTROL OF HIS FACULTIES, HIS GOVERNMENT
AND HIS PARTY.

4. IN A PACKED SENATE CHAMBER, BALAGUER CRITICIZED
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CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT, SAYING HE WAS WITHOUT BLAME
FOR PECULATIONS BY PEOPLE IN HIS ADMINISTRATION. HE
EXPLAINED THAT AUTONOMOUS, STATE-RUN ENTERPRISES WHERE
SUCH CORRUPTION OCCURS WERE SUBJECT TO SPECIAL LAWS AND
IRREGULARITIES ARE DIFFICULT CONTROL. HE ALSO
DEFENDED THE LEGALIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY,
CHARACTERIZED ITS LEADERSHIP AS CONSISTING OF YOUNG

INTELLECTUALS REPRESENTING THE "FLOWER OF DOMINICAN INTELLIGENTSIA", AND LABELLED THE PRD AS THE PARTY OF "REVOLUTION".

5. HE ALSO EXTOLLED THE WORKS OF HIS LAST THREE TERMS AND PROMISED THE "SILENT MAJORITY" OF DOMINICAN VOTERS WHO HAVE LOYALLY SUPPORTED HIM IN PAST A LONG LIST OF PUBLIC WORKS THAT WOULD BE BROUGHT TO COMPLETION IN HIS NEXT FOUR YEARS. HIS REFERENCE TO THE PLANNED CONSTRUCTION OF AN EIGHT LANE SANTO DOMINGO-SANTIAGO HIGHWAY BROUGHT LOUD CHEERS.

6. SOMEWHAT POIGNANTLY, AT END OF THE SPEECH, BALAGUER SAID HE WAS ENTERING FINAL PART OF HIS POLITICAL CAREER. THAT SIMPLE FACT, HE SAID, MEANT THAT THE NEXT FOUR YEARS WOULD BE A PERIOD IN WHICH HE WOULD ACHIEVE THE DREAMS OF HIS CHILDHOOD TO BRING GREATER PEACE AND PROSPERITY TO THE COUNTRY.

7. IN HIS LENGTHY DIATRIBE AGAINST THE PRD, BALAGUER NEVER MENTIONED NAMES. BUT LEST THERE BE ANY DOUBT IN THE AUDIENCE ABOUT THE PERSON WHO WAS A SPECIFIC TARGET OF THE ATTACK, BALAGUER STOPPED AT MID-POINT IN HIS DENUNCIATION OF THE "PARTY OF REVOLUTION" TO HAVE A TAPE

PLAYED OF A SPEECH BY THE PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL, JOSE
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FRANCISCO PENA GOMEZ, AT THE PRD NATIONAL CONVENTION LAST NOVEMBER. STYLED THE "PROPHET OF REVOLUTION" BY BALAGUER, PENA'S TAPED REMARKS HAD HIM SAYING "...THE FIRST PRD GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO BE ONE OF NATIONAL UNITY...AS THE STARTING POINT OF A REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS". FOLLOWING RENDITION OF THIS SINGLE PARAGRAPH FROM PENA'S SPEECH, BALAGUER SAID: "WATER COULDN'T BE CLEARER".

8. COMMENT: CONSENSUS THIS MORNING IS THAT THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS WAS PURE POLITICAL THEATER, AND EFFECTIVE THEATER IT WAS. ALTHOUGH NOT MUCH ATTENTION WAS PAID TO BALAGUER'S LAUDATORY REFERENCES TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (WHICH PCD LATER REJECTED), IT APPEARED TO SOME THAT WHILE ATTEMPTING TO SHOW HOW LIBERAL HIS OWN POSITION WAS, HE WAS ALSO SUBTLY INVITING REDICALIZED VOTERS WHO WERE NOT IN HIS "SILENT MAJORITY" TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR THE COMMUNISTS RATHER THAN THE "PARTY OF REVOLUTION", THE PRD. LISTIN DIARIO, COUNTRY'S LEADING DAILY, PRAISED BALAGUER'S ELOQUENCE AS WELL AS HIS POWERS OF MEMORY AND IMPROVISATION IN SPEECH. LISTIN OPINED HOWEVER THAT JUST AS OPPOSITION FAILS SYSTEMATICALLY TO GIVE CREDIT TO BALAGUER FOR POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS,

PRESIDENT HAD FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE OTHER
DOMINICANS CAPABLE OF ASSUMING LEADERSHIP ROLE IN COUNTRY.
IT ADDED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN REAL CHANGES IN POLITICAL
ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC IDEALS OF OPPOSITION
LEADERS WHO ONCE CALLED FOR REVOLUTION. ANOTHER REACTION
TO SPEECH IN LIBERAL PRESS AND OPPOSITION CIRCLES
WAS THAT VEHEMENT ATTACK ON PRD REVEALED A HIGHLY
DEFENSIVE STATE OF MIND ON PART OF PRESIDENT.

9. TEXT OF SPEECH POUCHED TO STATE DEPT DESK
OFFICER DE SANTILLANA.
AXELROD

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NNN

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